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July 3, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Federal Election Commission
Office of Complaints Examination and Legal Administration
Attn: Mary Beth deBeau, Paralegal
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20436
CELA@fec.gov

Re: MUR 7246 - Response of Georgia State Senator Jeff Mullis to FEC Complaint Filed Against U.S. Representative Buddy Carter and Buddy Carter for Congress

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is issued on behalf of Georgia State Senator Jeff E. Mullis (hereinafter the "Respondent") in response to the complaint filed with your office by Ms. Lisa M. Ring (the "Complainant") on May 4, 2017 - MUR 7246 (hereinafter the "Complaint") - and referenced in your letter dated May 19th.

As you are aware, the Respondent has no affirmative obligation to respond to the unfounded allegations in the Complainant's letter. However, given the seriousness of the claims made by Ms. Ring—as well as the defamatory nature of statements alleging Respondent's involvement in a criminal conspiracy to violate federal law—we feel such a response is necessary. In turn, please accept this letter as Senator Mullis' initial response¹ to the specious claims made by the Complainant, and as a formal request by the Respondent to dismiss this matter without further consideration by the Federal Election Commission ("FEC" or the "Commission").

It should be noted at the outset that the Complainant in this matter recently announced² her intent to challenge incumbent Congressman Buddy Carter—the primary target of the Complaint—in the 2018 U.S. House of Representative's election for Georgia's First Congressional District. It is an unfortunate reality of our current political climate that candidates occasionally seek to undermine their electoral opponents by filing frivolous ethics or campaign finance complaints. These unprincipled individuals have learned through observation of past political cycles that the mere act of accusing someone of impropriety—regardless of the veracity (or lack thereof) of the claims at issue—almost universally guarantees some degree of negative publicity for the targeted candidate and forces that candidate to waste precious campaign resources defending against the levied allegations. The present Complaint is a textbook example of this kind of dishonest political ploy, and should not be given any additional consideration by the Commission or its staff.

¹ Respondent reserves all rights, as necessary, to respond further to this matter.

² "Bryan County Democrat Lisa Ring announces run against Congressman Buddy Carter for the GA-1 District", *Savannah Business Journal*, June 22, 2017.

Upon examination of the correspondence filed with the FEC by the Complainant, it is clear that Ms. Ring's true intent—as demonstrated by the timing of the Complaint itself (filed shortly before her announcement to run for Congress) and meritless nature of the allegations contained therein—is to damage the electoral prospects of her 2018 political opponent. Rather than challenge Congressman Carter on pertinent matters of public policy or issues of import to Georgia's First District, the Complainant is leveraging an utterly unsubstantiated series of allegations to raise her own media profile and impugn the reputation of a sitting Congressman and roughly half-a-dozen members of the Georgia General Assembly, including Senator Mullis, who support his candidacy. Such an abuse of process and Commission resources cannot be allowed to stand.

In regard to the specifics of the Complaint at issue in this matter, we note that Ms. Ring has fundamentally failed to identify any justiciable claim against Respondent under either the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (as amended) or its associated regulations. Rather than pinpointing a particular statute or regulation that has been purportedly violated by the Respondent, the Complainant simply makes a general conspiratorial claim about Senator Mullis based upon two legally-permissible campaign contributions made from his personal funds in 2013 and 2014. Similarly, instead of providing legal or factual arguments to substantiate why these personal contributions are at all problematic, the Complainant simply intimates that these \$500 donations are part of a broader scheme to direct funds from Congressman Carter's previous Georgia state campaign committee (from his time as a Georgia State Senator) to his federal campaign committee. The language of the Complaint itself provides no evidence whatsoever to back up this insinuation and likewise makes no effort to point out how Respondent's activity fits within the purported conduit scheme described. Complainant's allegations thus fall well short of the legal standard necessary to sustain FEC consideration of this matter as it relates to Respondent.

As can be seen on pg. 2 of the Complaint, the full extent of Ms. Ring's "evidence" of purported wrongdoing by the Respondent are a mere three sentences identifying campaign contributions that are a matter of public record - see, e.g.:

"On July 10, 2013, Georgia state senator Jeff Mullis contributed \$500 to [Buddy Carter for Congress]. On April 9, 2014, [Friends of Buddy Carter for Senate] contributed \$1,000 to Mullis's campaign committee. On April 22, 2014, Mullis contributed an additional \$500 to the Federal Committee." [Citations omitted].

Through the inclusion of these statements, Complainant appears to be alleging that the \$1,000 donation to Senator Mullis' state campaign committee from Friends of Buddy Carter for Senate ("FBCS") was somehow simultaneously reimbursement and advance payment for Respondent's \$500 personal contributions to Congressman Carter's federal campaign in July 2013 and April 2014. This is not only false, but wholly illogical and irrational. As is clear from the record, Senator Mullis made two legal contributions (more than a year apart) to Congressman Carter's federal campaign from his own personal funds. The noted donation by FBCS in April 2014, however, went to Respondent's Georgia state campaign committee - not to any personal account of the Respondent. In turn, it is difficult to explain the Complainant's rationale for alleging a conduit scheme as it relates to Senator Mullis. Perhaps it is indicative of Ms. Ring's lack of understanding of the difference between individual contributions and those made by a political committee, or perhaps it is just part of her intentional effort to spin a conspiratorial tale against her fall 2018 political opponent. Either way, it is readily evident that Senator Mullis' personal donations in this matter were perfectly permissible under federal law, properly disclosed in accordance with FEC requirements, and in no way tied to any donations made to his Georgia state campaign committee by FBCS or any other entities.

The plain and simple truth of this matter is that there was never any "conduit contribution scheme" as the Complainant has alleged. Furthermore, with respect to the suggested involvement of Senator Mullis in this fictional criminal enterprise, the Complaint has done little more than restate (albeit, in a misleading manner) factual claims about political donations made by Senator Mullis that are already a matter of public record. Without any evidence to support the assertion that Senator Mullis' personal contributions were somehow improper, the Complainant is forced to rely exclusively on innuendo and speculation to make her "case." It would be a waste of the Commission's time and resources to lend any credence to such allegations or to expend any effort investigating such a politically-motivated stunt. Fortunately, Ms. Ring's Complaint is so clearly lacking in merit that immediate dismissal is the obvious course of action moving forward.

For these reasons, and for the sake of discouraging similar efforts to exploit the FEC's complaint review process for political gain, the Commission should dismiss the instant Complaint as it relates to Respondent or, alternatively, find that there is no reason to believe that Senator Mullis has run afoul of the requirements of federal campaign finance law. Respondent also respectfully asks that the FEC take note of the blatantly tactical nature of the present Complaint and reach a similar conclusion as it relates to Congressman Carter and the other parties named in Ms. Ring's submission.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our response to this matter. Should you have any questions or require additional information from Senator Mullis, please do not hesitate to reach out to either of us.

Sincerely,



J. Randolph Evans
Benjamin P. Keane
Counsel to Senator Jeff Mullis

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